

THE IMPACT OF INCREASED TURKISH QATARI SECURITY RELATIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

In the multipolar security system of the Middle East, the global forces are increasingly acting on their own, and regional actors are emerging as game changers/spoilers. Turkey, described as an insulator state, bordering among the European, the ex-Soviet and the Middle East regional security complexes according to the Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory of Buzan, has been transforming into a game changer in this volatile environment. In this context, Turkey opened up its border to more than three millions Syrians fleeing from Syrian civil war, and for its border security Turkey carried out three military operations successfully in Syria. Turkey has also improved its relations with Qatar at many levels and the political, economic and military association between these two countries has turned into a strategic alliance after the establishment of the Supreme Strategic Committee in 2014. This elevating relationship led Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Israel to close ranks which brought out risk of instability and further polarization in the Middle East. This study argues that Turkey due to its internal security problems mostly originating from the Middle East along with its desire to become a more assertive actor in the region is in the process of transforming from an insulator state to a game changer. Shielding Qatar from the encroachments of its fellow Gulf monarchies in addition to Egypt in the political arena, sending goods to ally the economic embargo imposed on the country and finally opening up a mili-

tary base in Doha demonstrate that Turkey has recorded significant progress regarding this purpose. However, the growing interaction between Turkey and Qatar -inevitably securitized by other countries in the region- will be likely to become the target of the military alliance that Saudi Arabia will establish with other countries in the Middle East, especially with Egypt.

Key words: *Regional Security Complex Theory, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Security.*

1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War marks a significant turning point in the role of regionalism and regional security arrangements in the study of International Relations. The regional level occupies a space between the level of the state and the international system. On the basis of proximity and shared historical and geographical roots, regional subsystems encapsulate an exclusive regional dynamic derived from balance of power relations and patterns of amity and enmity of its units.¹

According to the Copenhagen School's Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory, Turkey is an insulator state as it sits at the intersection of different security complexes without truly being part of any of them. Turkey located at the margins of three regional security complexes (RSCs): the European (which includes the Balkans subcomplex); the Middle Eastern (including the sub-complexes of the Levant, Gulf and Maghreb); and the ex-Soviet (including the Baltic; Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova; the Caucasus; and Central Asia).² This understanding of Turkey's position in the international security realm has offered a welcome contribution to the eternal debate about the country's security alignment between East and West.

The aim of this study is to review and suggest adjustments to the regional security complex (RSC) theory worked out by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver by examining whether it is possible for Turkey to become a "regional power" or "a game changer" while remaining an insulator state. According to RSC theory, it is quite improbable for an insulator state to act like a great power. The combination of economic, military and societal assertiveness means that unlike many insulators, Turkey has the capacity to try and escape the status quo. The hypothesis of this study is that thanks to its geographic location and its politi-

cal, economic and military capacities, Turkey is not an ordinary insulator but an active game changer.

Turkey's geopolitical identity has undergone many changes since the end of the Cold War. Turkey's foreign and security policy has changed dramatically in terms of both its regional context and its strategic goals since the beginning of the Arab Spring. Turkey has, in recent years, become more active on the international stage, diversifying its relations and taking a more assertive stance regarding international security issues. Turkish involvement in the Arab Spring and the Syrian Civil War started at a time when Turkey's impressive record of democratic reform³ and economic growth in the 2000s supported unprecedented national and international enthusiasm about the potentially democratizing influence of the country in the Greater Middle East, often referred to as the "Turkish model."⁴ This shift in its foreign and security policy is related to the country's ambition to become a great power in the near future. As a consequence, Turkey is, as former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton declared, an "emerging global power."⁵ However, since Turkey which is not belong to one of these three RSCs it could not be a great power. Turkey could not be a great power in the European RSC. EU's refusal to continue negotiations on membership after 2005, and the rise of Islamophobia in Europe reduced Turkey's enthusiasm for EU membership. Therefore, Turkey's membership of the EU in the near future seems unlikely.

As for Turkey to be a part of Middle East is also a debatable issue both inside and outside Turkey. For a long time, Turkey, especially during the Cold War years ignored the Middle East due to some conjunctural and/or ideological reasons despite the fact that the Middle East and Turkey has historical, physical and cultural bounds.⁶ After the Cold War Turkish foreign policy goals towards the region are primarily strategic and rely on to develop mutual trust and mutual respect. The Arab Spring provided an opportunity for Turkey to

3 Şener Aktürk, "Turkey's Civil Rights Movement and the Reactionary Coup: Segregation, Emancipation, and the Western Reaction," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2016): 141-167.

4 Emel Parlar Dal and Emre Erşen, "Reassessing the "Turkish Model" in the Post-Cold War Era: A Role Theory Perspective," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2014): 258-282.

5 Nadine Godehardt and Dirk Nabers, ed., *Regional Powers and Regional Orders*, (USA and Canada: Routledge/GARNET Series, 2011), 188.

6 Tayyar Arı and Ferhat Pirinççi, "Turkey's New Foreign Policy Towards The Middle East And The Perceptions In Syria And Lebanon", *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, Cilt 4 Sayı 7, (Kış 2010): 1.

reaffirm its newly founded political identity and become the leading advocate of democracy in the Middle East. The Arab Spring promised new democratic policies that would more easily adapt to Islamic religious practices in the Middle East. Turkey has adopted a proactive, mediating role in the Middle East since the mid-2000s. In spite of some minor successes, Turkey's efforts have been questioned, first by its deteriorating relations with Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt and then by its active involvement in Syrian civil war in 2011.

Seeking to implement a more proactive policy in the Middle East RSC, Turkey has sought to establish close relations with countries in the region. In this context Qatar is one of the countries that Turkey has built relations with in every level. Especially, during the uprisings in the Middle East RSC and in their aftermath, the strategic alliance between Turkey and Qatar has been shaped and strengthened through agreements, diplomatic visits and statements. Successful steps have been taken in terms of military cooperation. Turkey and Qatar have built opportunities for more military and economic relations in the future with the creation of the High Strategic Committee in 2014.

This article consists of three parts. In the first part the Middle East RSC is explained briefly, and it is also focused on Turkey's role as a game changer in the Middle East RSC. In the third part it is focused on Turkish Qatari security relations and its impact on the Middle East security.

2. The Middle East RSC and Turkey

Barry Buzan has defined a "security complex" as "a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities can not realistically be considered apart from one another."⁷ RSCs exist throughout the international system and "are defined by durable patterns of amity and enmity taking the form of subglobal, geographically coherent patterns of security interdependence."⁸ Buzan suggests that, in a world of mutually exclusive RSC theory can sharply distinguish between the regional and

7 Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era (second edition)* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 190.

8 Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Power: The Structure of International Security* (New York, United States: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 45.

global levels.⁹

The Middle East is one of the most turbulent and unstable regions of the world. The Middle East RSC is a standard type with no great powers and frequently confronted with low-level warfare and religious and tribal conflicts that blur ideas of state sovereignty, have combined with poor opportunities to prevent any aspirant hegemon emerging.¹⁰ This, in effect, left the RSC vulnerable to outside interference. The Middle East currently consists of three sub-complexes.

The first and defining central sub-complex in the Middle East is the Levant sub-complex which covers Syria, Lebanon, Egypt. Levant sub-complex also includes the Maghreb states.¹¹ This sub-complex is between Israel and its Arab neighbors that has culminated in many regional wars. It is the result and the reflection of the local struggle between Israel and the Palestinians, which set up and sustained a much wider hostility between Israel, on the one hand, and its immediate neighbours, on the other, as well as the wider Arab world.

The second sub-complex in the Middle East is the one centred on the triangular rivalry among Iran, Iraq and the Gulf Arab states led by Saudi Arabia. To this core rivalry, one may add the peripheral rivalry between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The boundaries of RSCs can change; for example, by inclusion of new units or by changes in outer-regional security conditions. Inclusion of the Yemen in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) produces a changed sub-set and regional interior insecurity and new boundary volatility. Iran's suggestion of its replacement of the US as guarantor of the Gulf region's security raises fear of a deepened hegemony. Iran has its own boundary issues, which by extension could change the pattern of Gulf regional "security interdependence." It is also suggested that the Horn of Africa sub-complex should be located within the African security complex.¹² However, due to increasing patterns of security interdependence, a strong case can be made that today this sub-complex constitutes a third Middle East sub-complex with Sudan and Somalia as its

9 Amitav Acharya, "The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics", *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (2007), 635.

10 Wayne McLean, "Regional Security Complex Theory and Insulator States: The Case of Turkey", Thesis of Bachelor of Arts, (University of Tasmania, 2011), 26.

11 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*, 193.

12 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*, 155; Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 128.

principals and where Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Gulf States have taken a significant interest. In the Horn of Africa sub-complex Turkey launched a military training base in Somalia's capital Mogadishu for training more than 10,000 soldiers. This largest forward base enhanced Turkey's reliability as an essential player for the security of this area. The base is an indication of Turkey's enduring support for its lead partner in the Horn of Africa.¹³

Within the RSC theory, Turkey is classified as an "insulator state," which has the characteristics of geographical "in-betweenness" and faces difficult security issues from two regions.¹⁴ Within this context, insulators are distinguished from buffer states in that the latter's function "is defined by standing at the centre of a strong pattern of securitisation, not at its edge."¹⁵ This means that, despite its strategic relevance, historical past and military power, Turkey sits at the margins of three RSCs: the European, the Middle Eastern, and the ex-Soviet. Even though Turkey participates actively in all three, it does so, according to the complex security, from the position of an outsider. By considering Turkey as an insulator, RSC theory has been able to convincingly explain why such a relevant geopolitical actor has not been more present in the security dynamics of its neighbours, highlighting Turkey's unique position in the vicinity.¹⁶

Generally, insulator states have not been strong enough to unify and solve problems arising from two regions. The insulator state seems to be relatively passive actors in regional politics.¹⁷ To sum up, the necessary conditions of an insulator state are geographical location, cutoff ability against a military threat, and a passive character.

For Turkey, Buzan and Wæver stated that Turkey has been an "active" insulator state since the end of the Cold War.¹⁸ According to the theory Turkey can only be promoted to greatpower status if it first becomes a regional power, and for that to happen it needs to belong to a RSC. It is generally discussed if it

13 Pınar Akpınar, "From Benign Donor to Self-Assured Security Provider: Turkey's Policy in Somalia", İstanbul Politikalar Merkezi (İPM), 2017, 4-5.

14 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*, 41.

15 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*, 45.

16 André Barrinha, "The Ambitious Insulator: Revisiting Turkey's Position in Regional Security Complex Theory", *Mediterranean Politics*, 19/2 (2014), 165-182.

17 Buzan, *People, States, and Fear*, 392.

18 Buzan, *People, States, and Fear*, 394.

is possible for Turkey to become an international power while remaining an insulator state. The combination of economic, military and societal assertiveness means that unlike many insulators, Turkey has the potential to try and escape the status quo.¹⁹ Therefore thanks to its geographic location and its political, economic and military capacities, Turkey is not an ordinary insulator but an active game changer.

After the Cold War, Turkey began to get involved in Central Asia, the Balkan Peninsula, and the Middle East. Buzan and Wæver concluded that Turkey was “still an insulator state” because of its strategic position and political will/capacity to connect with the different security regions together.²⁰ Turkey preferred staying neutral in the Middle East and focused on enhancing its ties with the West. It is suggested that Turkey should play the “active” insulator role as an alternative to becoming an EU member.²¹ Turkey tried to improve relations with the European Union (EU) and to work on the policies for the EU membership. However, due to the discouraging EU accession process, Turkey’s EU accession process has become more questionable.²² Therefore Turkey’s foreign policy began to shift to a specific RSC, namely the Middle East RSC.²³

According to Buzan’s definition, insulator states “are standing between regional security complexes and defining a location where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back.”²⁴ One of the characteristics of an insulator state is that it is passive; however, it is frequently emphasized the active behavior of the insulator state. Thus RSC theory is unfit for the Turkish foreign policy.²⁵ Turkey has changed quite significantly since the end of the Cold War. Turkey’s foreign and security policy changes have been accompanied by a significant increase in its material capabilities (its strong army, its young population, etc) – particularly its economy (it is a member of G20) – as well by its peers’ recognition of its increasing importance in the international scene.

19 Barrinha, “The Ambitious Insulator”, 165-182.

20 Buzan, *People, States, and Fear*, 394-395.

21 Barry Buzan and Thomas Diez, “The European Union and Turkey,” *Survival*, 41: 1 (Spring 1999): 54.

22 Thomas Diez, “Turkey, the European Union and security complexes revisited”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 10(2), 173.

23 Barrinha, “The Ambitious Insulator”, 165-182.

24 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*, 490.

25 Barrinha, “The Ambitious Insulator”, 166.

Turkey faced with significant political challenges in the region, such as 2003 US invasion of Iraq, popular uprisings across the Arab world, the Syrian civil war, the emergence of DEASH and PYD/YPG and the GCC crisis. During Syrian civil war Turkey opened up its border to more than three millions Syrians fleeing from Syria, and for its border security Turkey carried out three military operations successfully in Syria. These prove that Turkey, as a great power that occupies an insulator position and sitting at the intersection of different RSCs without fully belonging to any of them can shift to one of these RSCs when necessary in order to reach its foreign and security policy goals. Therefore it would be better to make some adjustment on the RSC theory of Buzan so as to explain Turkey's transformation from an insulator state to an emerging power, or a game changer.

3. Turkish Qatari Security Relations and Its Effect on the Middle East RSC

Although Qatar gained its independence in 1971 under the reign of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani; however, until 1995, Qatar had been “overshadowed” by two of its neighbours, Saudi Arabia and Iran, and remained largely withdrawn from regional and international affairs.²⁶ During this period, Qatar focussed on its internal affairs rather than making its presence felt in the international area. After Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani overthrew his father in a bloodless coup in 1995, Qatar started to make its own way and develop “innovative” diplomacy.²⁷ Since its independence from Britain in 1971, Qatar has sought to preserve some room for manoeuvre for itself in regional diplomacy.²⁸ This became more visible once Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani came to power in 1995 and managed good relations with the US. The most important American military base in the region is located at Al Udeid, in Qatar.

26 Ebrar Şahika Küçükaşçı, “Entente Cordiale: Exploring the Turkey-Qatar Relations”, *Discussion Paper*, TRT World Research Center, pp. 5-13, accessed September 12, 2019, https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/images/files/discussion_papers/Turkey-Qatar.pdf.

27 Roy Miller and Harry Verhoeven, “Overcoming smallness: Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and strategic realignment in the Gulf,” *International Politics*, (May 2019): 1-20, accessed September 12, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-019-00180-0>.

28 Sultan Barakat, “The Qatari Spring: Qatar’s emerging role in peacemaking,” Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States, LSE, No: 22, July 2012, p. 3, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/59266/1/The-Qatari-Spring%20-%20Qatars-Emerging-Role-in-Peacemaking.pdf>.

South Pars/North Dome which is the world's largest natural gas field is located in Qatar. Its ownership is shared between Iran and Qatar.²⁹

The crisis of March, 2014 symbolized by the withdrawal from Doha of the ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the Kingdom of Bahrain was the first of its kind since the establishment of the GCC.³⁰ Therefore it set a precedent in terms of dispute resolution between the six member states. Nevertheless, the resolutions that emerged from the 35th GCC summit held in Doha on 9 December 2014 indicated a kind of convergence in understanding among the GCC countries on a number of regional issues.

The very first attempt of establishing an alliance between Turkey and Qatar came into open in December 2014.³¹ Then Turkish President Erdoğan and Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani met in Qatar for the first Turkish-Qatari High Level Strategic Committee on 2 December 2015. This meeting was critical and paved the way for the establishment of a Turkish military base at the Tariq bin Ziyad military base outside Doha. Fifteen agreements on education, environment, maritime affairs, energy, science, and technology were signed.³² A mechanized battalion battle group involving about 300 Turkish soldiers were deployed to this military base in October 2015, in a bid to contribute to the regional peace in scope of bilateral military relations of Turkey and Qatar.³³ The location of this military base is very strategic for the Gulf and the Middle East in politics and in energy matters. It is also a counter balancing power concerning Iran and Saudi Arabia. The second Turkish-Qatari High Level Strategic Committee meeting took place in Trabzon on 18 December 2016 under the chair of the two leaders. During these meetings, various

29 Davod Kiany, "Comparison of Gas Production Between Iran and Qatar in South Field," *Journal of Economic and Social Research*, Vol. 18, Special Issue.1, 2019, 77-86, accessed September 19, 2019, <http://www.jesr.org/wp-content/2019s1/JESR201917786.pdf>.

30 Alexey Khlebnikov, "The new ideological threats to the GCC: implications for the Qatari-Saudi rivalry," *Strategic Assessment*, Volume 17, No. 4, January 2015, 1-12, accessed September 8, 2019, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286379438_The_new_ideological_threats_to_the_GCC_implications_for_the_Qatari-Saudi_rivalry.

31 Bülent Aras and Pınar Akpınar, *Turkish Foreign Policy and the Qatar Crisis*, (August 2017): 4.

32 Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, "15 Agreements Signed between Turkey and Qatar," 02.12.2015, accessed September 8, 2019, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/36171/turkiye-ile-katar-arasinda-15-anlasma-imzalandi>.

33 Stasa Salacanian, "Turkey expands its military base and influence in Qatar," 10 September, 2019, accessed September 8, 2019, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2019/9/10/turkey-expands-its-military-base-and-influence-in-qatar>.

agreements, protocols and memoranda of understanding were signed, further strengthening Turkey's relations with Qatar.³⁴

The second Qatar crisis began on June 5, 2017, when Bahrain, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt announced that they would sever ties with Qatar, imposing a diplomatic standoff and a *de facto* blockade on Qatar. The blockading countries, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt, cut off their diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed a land, air and sea blockade leading to food shortages in Qatar and troubles in its trade routes.³⁵

On June 9, 2017, a joint action by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt (anti-Qatar quartet) placed 59 individuals and 12 organisations on a "terrorist list". The anti-Qatar quartet released a list of thirteen demands, with a 10-day expiration date, which included shutting down the Turkish military base in Qatar. Qatar rejected the demands as an infringement on Qatar's sovereignty.³⁶

This GCC Crisis served to intensify the relationship between Turkey and Qatar. Turkey immediately stated that there was no attempt from Turkey to close the Turkish military base in Qatar and this military base is not only an indicator of Turkey's solidarity with Qatar, but also has been an indication of how important the preservation of peace in the region. On 7 June 2017, the Turkish parliament ratified the bill which authorized the deployment of Turkish troops to the Turkish military base in Qatar.³⁷ Later, Turkish President Erdoğan visited the Turkish base on 15 November 2017 and highlighted the importance of peace in the region. More Turkish troops were deployed at this military base after the Gulf Crisis, leading to a cooling of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Under the bill, the armies of the two countries will

34 Qatar Embassy in Ankara-Turkey, "HH the Emir, President of Turkey Co-Chair the Qatar-Turkey High-Level Strategic Committee Meeting," 18 December 2016, accessed September 8, 2019. <https://ankara.embassy.qa/en/news/detail/2016/12/21/hh-the-emir-president-of-turkey-co-chair-the-qatar-turkey-high-level-strategic-committee-meeting>.

35 Zeina Azzam and Imad K. Harb, "The GCC Crisis at One Year Stalemate Becomes New Reality," 2018, accessed September 8, 2019. <http://arabcenterdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/The-GCC-Crisis-at-One-Year.pdf>.

36 Aljezeera, "Qatar marks second anniversary of Arab quartet blockade," 5 June 2019, accessed September 8, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/qatar-marks-anniversary-arab-quartet-blockade-190604191944810.html>.

37 Reuters, "Turkish parliament approves bill to deploy troops in Qatar," June 7, 2017, accessed September 8, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-turkey/turkish-parliament-approves-bill-to-deploy-troops-in-qatar-idUSKBN18Y2JE>.

also be able to carry out joint exercises. The move aims to contribute to regional and world peace. In addition, the Turkish gendarmerie will be able to train Qatar's gendarmerie forces under a deal between the two countries' interior ministries signed in December 2015.³⁸

Turkish soldiers have subsequently held joint military exercises with both the Qatar Emiri Naval Forces (QENF) and the Qatar Emiri Land Forces (QELF) as a precaution against a possible military intervention by the blockading countries. A two-stage joint exercise, bringing together militaries of Turkey and Qatar started in the Persian Gulf on 01 August 2017 as part of the 2014 bilateral security agreement.³⁹

Over 250 Turkish soldiers and more than 30 armored vehicles took part in the on-land stage of the drills, while the second stage was held with the participation of the Turkish frigate TCG Gökova, which had recently arrived in Qatar with a 214-strong crew.⁴⁰ On August 7-8, high-rank officials of both countries visited the exercise area within the framework of the so-called "distinguished observer days." Recently, military cooperation between Turkey and Qatar was further enhanced. On 13 January 2019, during the launch of a new facility for Turkish defense firm BMC, President Erdoğan announced that this facility would produce military products which would be exported to Qatar. Qatar has already invested in BMC, and its share is expected to increase with this new facility.⁴¹

Turkey and Qatar have agreed to significantly expand the Qatar-Turkey Combined Joint Force Command (QTCJFC) in Doha with naval and aerial components.⁴² The expansion will be completed soon and will mark a strength-

38 Alp Ozden, "Turkish parliament ratifies Qatar military deals," AA, 07.06.2017, accessed September 8, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-parliament-ratifies-qatar-military-deals/836771>.

39 MEMRI, "2. Turkish Bases In Qatar," November 12, 2019, accessed September 13, <https://www.memri.org/reports/turkey-qatar-relations-bilateral-ties-strategic-partnership-turkish-bases-qatar>.

40 Sevil Erkuş, "Turkey starts joint military exercise with Qatar," *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 01 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-starts-joint-military-exercise-with-qatar-116202>.

41 Mohammad Shoeb, "Qatar to invest in Turkey's first car brand," *The Peninsula*, 17 Jan 2018, <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/17/01/2018/Qatar-to-invest-in-Turkey%E2%80%99s-first-car-brand>.

42 Yunus Paksoy, "Turkish Military in Qatar: Bonds of mutual trust," *Daily Sabah Feature*, 12.06.2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/feature/2018/06/13/turkish-military-in-qatar>.

ened Turkish presence in the region. So far, the Turkish presence has involved a mechanised battalion with an estimated strength of 300 soldiers, but according to Turkish reports, the Turkish contingent will grow into a brigade of around 2,000 soldiers.⁴³

Apart from close political and personal ties between Qatari and Turkish leadership, the defence industry has been one of the key areas for the expanding cooperation, with Turkey growing into a major supplier of military equipment for Qatar.

There are major military deals between Turkish arm producers and Qatar. These include:⁴⁴

- Baykar, which produces the TB-2 armed drones;
- Nurol Makina, the manufacturer of the 4x4 Ejder combat vehicles;
- BMC, which produces the Kirpi mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles and Amazon multipurpose armoured vehicles;
- Anadolu Shipyard, which manufactures cadet training ships.

Important contracts for these were achieved at the 2018 International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference in Doha, with the two countries signing deals worth a total of \$800 million.⁴⁵ Moreover, Turkey's Aselsan Company had formally incorporated a joint venture (JV) with Qatar's Barzan Holdings. The main focus here would be the production of command-and-control (C2) systems, thermal and night-vision cameras, cryptographic systems, and remote-controlled weapon stations (RCWS).⁴⁶ Turkey's Defence Industry Presidency and the joint Turkish-Qatari vehicle manufacturer BMC had signed

bonds-of-mutual-trust.

43 Salacanian, "Turkey expands its military base"

44 OEWATCH, "China's Reach," Volume 8, Issue:5, May 2018; Presidency of Turkish Defence Industry Products, accessed September 3, 2019 <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/ENFORMASYON/SSB-tanitim-catalog.pdf>.

45 *İbrahim Sünnetçi*, "Turkey: A Proven NATO-Standard Compliant Defence Industry Partner for MENA Region Countries," *Turkish Defence & Aerospace Industry and MENA Region*, Issue 90, accessed September 8, 2019. <https://www.defenceturkey.com/en/content/turkey-a-proven-nato-standard-compliant-defence-industry-partner-for-mena-region-countries-3378>.

46 Defence Turkey, "Turkish Companies Received Total \$800 Million in Orders at DIMDEX Fair," *Turkish Defence & Aerospace Industry and MENA Region*, Issue 82, accessed September 8, 2019. <https://www.defenceturkey.com/en/content/turkish-companies-received-total-800-million-in-orders-at-dimdex-fair-3047>.

a multibillion-dollar contract for the serial production of the Altay battle tank in 2018; 250 tanks are to be produced for Turkey and 40 for Qatar.⁴⁷ These developments indicate that Qatar has not only become a market for the Turkish defence industry but also an investor for it.

Turkish-Qatari relations were not limited to the military cooperation. Turkey-Qatar High Strategic Committee is the catalyst of this relationship. Its second meeting was held on 18 December 2016. When both sides came together in Trabzon for this meeting, memoranda of understanding were signed regarding cooperation in the spheres of higher education, information technology, health and medical sciences, youth communication and the organization of cultural activities.⁴⁸ Thus, it is clear that both countries aimed to cooperate beyond the existing political and economic aspects.

After the 15 July 2016 coup attempt, the Emir of Qatar was the first person who called the President Erdoğan to express his and his country's solidarity with Turkey. Later, Foreign Ministry of Qatar published a declaration stating that "The State of Qatar expressed its strong denunciation and condemnation of the military coup attempt, lawlessness, and violation of the constitutional legitimacy in the Republic of Turkey."⁴⁹

When the blockade started, Qatar was faced with a food crisis. Turkey again showed its support by dispatching airlift and naval expeditions and supplied Doha with approximately 4,000 tons of food supplies.⁵⁰ Turkey also provided Qatar with the crucial supply of construction materials for ongoing FIFA 2022 World Cup projects. On the societal level, the support for Qatar has been outstanding. The day after the blockade started, the tweets with the hashtag #TurkeyWithQatar trended on Twitter. Turkish people used the hashtag to show their support whereas Qatari people expressed their appreciation. During the recent currency and debt crisis, in which the Turkish lira suffered, Qatar

47 Burak Ege Bekdil, "Turkey's multibillion-dollar Altay tank program faces delay," *DefenceNews*, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/industry/2019/11/14/turkeys-multibillion-dollar-altay-tank-program-faces-delay/>.

48 Küçükaşçı, "Entente Cordiale", 5-13.

49 Gulf Times, "Qatar slams military coup bid in Turkey", July 17, 2016. https://m.gulf-times.com/content/pdf/Dailynewspaper/Main2016_7_17366417.PDF.

50 Daren Butler and Tulay Karadeniz, "Turkey sends Qatar food and soldiers, discusses Gulf tensions with Saudi", June 22, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-turkey-saudi/turkey-sends-qatar-food-and-soldiers-discusses-gulf-tensions-with-saudi-idUSKBN19D0CX>.

offered its support. On 15 August 2018, the Emir of Qatar came to Turkey and met with President Erdoğan to offer his country's financial help. Qatar decided to invest \$15 billion to Turkey in support of the Turkish economy.⁵¹ Then the fourth High Level Strategic Committee meeting was held in Istanbul on 26 November 2018.⁵²

The survival of the Turkish-Qatari alliance will depend on Qatar's resistance to the imposed boycott. The situation may evolve into a long-standing feud, or it may end with Qatar's choice to fulfill the demands and ease tensions. In the meantime, Iran will surely be taking advantage of the situation to corner Saudi Arabia. It is still unclear whether the EU and the US will take sides in the conflict since they have so far been shifting positions on the issue. It seems there is no reason for Turkey to change its policy but it has to find ways to normalize its relations with the GCC, especially with Saudi Arabia.

4. Conclusion

After the Cold War Turkey's foreign and security policy have been accompanied by a significant increase in its economy as well by its peers' recognition of its increasing importance in the international scene. According to RSC theory of Buzan and Wæver it is clearly established that a great power must have previously been a regional power. Buzan and Wæver render it impossible for an insulator state to become an international power. Contrary to RSC theory, Turkey's political leadership recognizes that Turkey is not only an active insulator but also a game changer. During Syrian civil war Turkey opened up its border to more than three millions Syrians fleeing from Syria, and for its border security Turkey carried out three military operations successfully in Syria. These prove that Turkey, as a great power that occupies an insulator position and sitting at the intersection of different RSCs without fully belonging to any of them can shift to one of these RSCs when necessary in order to reach its foreign and security policy goals.

51 Nicolas Parasie, "Qatar Will Inject \$15 Billion Into Turkish Economy Amid Breakdown With U.S.," *The Wall Street Journal*, accessed September 8, 2019. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/qatar-will-inject-15-billion-into-turkish-economy-amid-breakdown-with-u-s-1534353882>.

52 MEMRI, "5. The Turkey-Qatar High Strategic Committee.," *Inquiry & Analysis Series*, No. 1482, November 12, 2019. <https://www.memri.org/reports/turkey-qatar-relations-bilateral-ties-strategic-partnership-high-strategic-ctee>.

Relations between Turkey and the GCC began in the context of security and subsequently evolved into economic cooperation. In addition, Qatar shared a similar attitude with Turkey vis-à-vis most of the popular Arab uprisings. During the uprisings and in their aftermath, the strategic alliance between Turkey and Qatar has been shaped and strengthened through agreements, diplomatic visits and statements. In terms of military cooperation, successful steps were undertaken. With the establishment of the High Strategic Committee, Turkey and Qatar have created arenas for more military and economic alliances in the future. Moreover, Ankara and Doha have reacted quickly when their counterpart confronted critical political or economic predicaments, such as the July 15 coup attempt, the GCC Crisis, and the recent currency and debt crisis that Turkey faced in 2018. Turkey enjoys deep-rooted ties of friendship and fraternity with Qatar and relations between the two countries have been rapidly improving in all fields. While bilateral visits add a major impetus to relations between Turkey and Qatar, both countries also closely coordinate and cooperate on regional issues. In this context, the annual High Level Strategic Committee meetings, the presence of a Turkish Qatari military base in Qatar, the regular military drills which are conducted by Turkish and Qatari military personnel, and finally the Qatari investments in the military sector of Turkey attest to emergence of a multifaceted and growing cooperation between the two countries in the security sphere.

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